

I played a blind shot from a deep greenside bunker onto the green, then raked the sand. Eventually, I got to my ball, missed the resulting putt and tapped in. Walking off the green, I noticed a stray ball marker. Turns out one of my playing partners forgot to tell me he'd marked my ball and moved it from her line. Should I have been allowed to replace my ball at the proper spot and replay from there? Also, any penalties and, if so, to whom? -Terry Christensen, via email

In stroke play, the other player is an outside influence, and there is no penalty to anyone for the ball being moved. File it under: Stuff happens.

Since you had no knowledge or virtual certainty that an outside influence moved your ball- see Rule 9.2b(2) if you're inclined - you proceeded correctly, not from a wrong place, and the ball is holed. No replace, no replay, no nada.

For more marking guidance from our guru, read on ...

I was called out for aligning my ball for a putt after lifting my ball marker and told that if I were caught doing it again I'd be penalized. Yet per Rule Clarification 14.2c/1, the ball can be aligned in any way so long as its vertical distance to the ground remains the same. I don't see any reference to a ball marker being required when lining up a putt. Can you clarify?

Sad to say, you were called out correctly. Never mind that "vertical distance to the ground" is a head scratcher, even for Rules Guy.

The clarification is a misdirection - it has nothing to do with why you're getting a penalty. You breached the rules by "lifting," which includes rotating, without first marking your ball. That's right: Rotating the ball is considered lifting under Rule 14.1, and you only get the right to lift the ball on the putting green after you mark it first.

So, if you rotate the ball when it isn't marked, you get one penalty stroke. In sum: Mark it!

Unmarked ball moved by natural forces on putting green

If you have marked, lifted and replaced your ball on the putting surface and the wind then causes it to move, Rule 13.1d(2) says it should be replaced on its original spot. That was one of the Rules that was changed in 2019.

But, if you haven't marked, lifted and replaced your ball and the wind causes the ball to move on the putting green you must play it from its new spot. If you have marked the ball but not touched the ball before the wind causes it to move, you also must still play it from its new spot.